



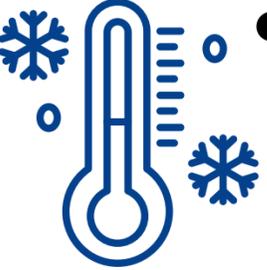
GETTING THROUGH THIS DIFFICULT TIME OF YEAR

Mark Farmer - Chair of
Fibromyalgia Friends
Together

stay kind

stay kind

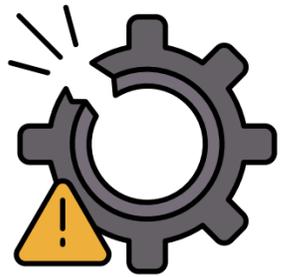
WHY IS THIS A DIFFICULT TIME OF YEAR FOR PEOPLE WITH FIBROMYALGIA?

-  • *Cold Weather Sensitivity:* Many people with Fibromyalgia experience increased pain and stiffness during colder months due to heightened sensitivity to temperature changes.
-  • *Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD):* The shorter days and reduced sunlight can exacerbate symptoms of depression and anxiety, which are often comorbid with Fibromyalgia.
-  • *Financial Pressures:* The financial strain of gift-giving and other holiday expenses can increase stress levels, potentially exacerbating Fibromyalgia.

WHY IS THIS A DIFFICULT TIME OF YEAR FOR PEOPLE WITH FIBROMYALGIA?



- *Holiday Stress: The holiday season can bring about increased stress and fatigue from planning, socializing, and managing expectations, which may worsen fibromyalgia symptoms.*



- *Routine Disruptions: Changes in daily routines during this time can lead to irregular sleep patterns and increased fatigue, making symptom management more challenging.*



- *Increased Physical Activity: The demands of holiday preparations and gatherings can lead to overexertion, which might trigger flares in pain and fatigue.*

WHY IS THIS A DIFFICULT TIME OF YEAR FOR PEOPLE WITH FIBROMYALGIA?

- *Diet Changes: Indulgent holiday foods and drinks can sometimes lead to flares, as certain ingredients may trigger symptoms in some people.*



WHAT CAN WE DO ABOUT THIS?

- Self compassion - and the kindness shield
- A couple of things to specifically remember at Christmas
- Grounding exercises



WHAT IS SELF-COMPASSION?

- Treating yourself with kindness, not judgment
- Being gentle with yourself during failure or stress.
- Talking to yourself like you would to a friend

"Self-compassion is not self-pity.
It's self-support."



WHY IT MATTERS

- Builds emotional strength.
- Reduces anxiety and stress.
- Improves confidence and motivation.
- Helps you bounce back from setbacks.

"You can't pour from an empty cup."

SPREAD
kindness

SPREAD
kindness

THE SELF KINDNESS SHIELD



It helps protect your mental and physical wellbeing during difficult moments, high-pressure seasons, or symptom flares. Many people with Fibromyalgia struggle with guilt, internal pressure, self-criticism, and the belief that they "should" be able to do more. The Self-Kindness Shield acts as a gentle barrier between you and unrealistic expectations —whether they come from within or from others. Your shield represents strength, protection, compassion, and permission to honour your limits. It is not a wall. It is a supportive boundary that helps you care for yourself with the same kindness you would give a friend.

WHAT DOES YOUR SELF - KINDNESS SHIELD LOOK LIKE?



Stay
STRONG

- Working in pairs
- Pick two questions for one of you to answer
- Pick two questions for the other person to answer
- Help each other along with suggestions
- If comfortable to do so share what went on your shield with the rest of the group



CHRISTMAS TIME



- Love isn't shown through spending — your presence, energy, and kindness matter far more than any price tag.
- You get to open gifts in whatever way feels comfortable. If you prefer to enjoy them privately and at your own pace, that's a completely valid choice.
- Thoughtful, secondhand, handmade, or no gifts at all — all of these are wonderful options.
- You're allowed to skip Secret Santa or any tradition that drains your energy. Protecting your well-being is a gift, too.
- You can choose where and how you spend the holidays. A quiet day at home with your pet, comfy clothes, and low stress is a beautiful way to honor your body and your needs.

GROUNDING EXERCISES

- Repeating compassionate statements helps soften internal pressure and reduce guilt.
- Breathing exercise help activate the parasympathetic (calming) nervous system. It slows the heart rate, relaxes muscles, and reduces the stress response.

*You can care about yourself and still
move forward*



KEEP
moving
FORWARD



GROUNDING EXERCISE 1

Close your eyes. Put your hand on your heart, say to yourself:

"I am doing the best I can with the body & feelings I have today. My needs are valid.

Rest is allowed.

"I deserve kindness, even when I'm not perfect."

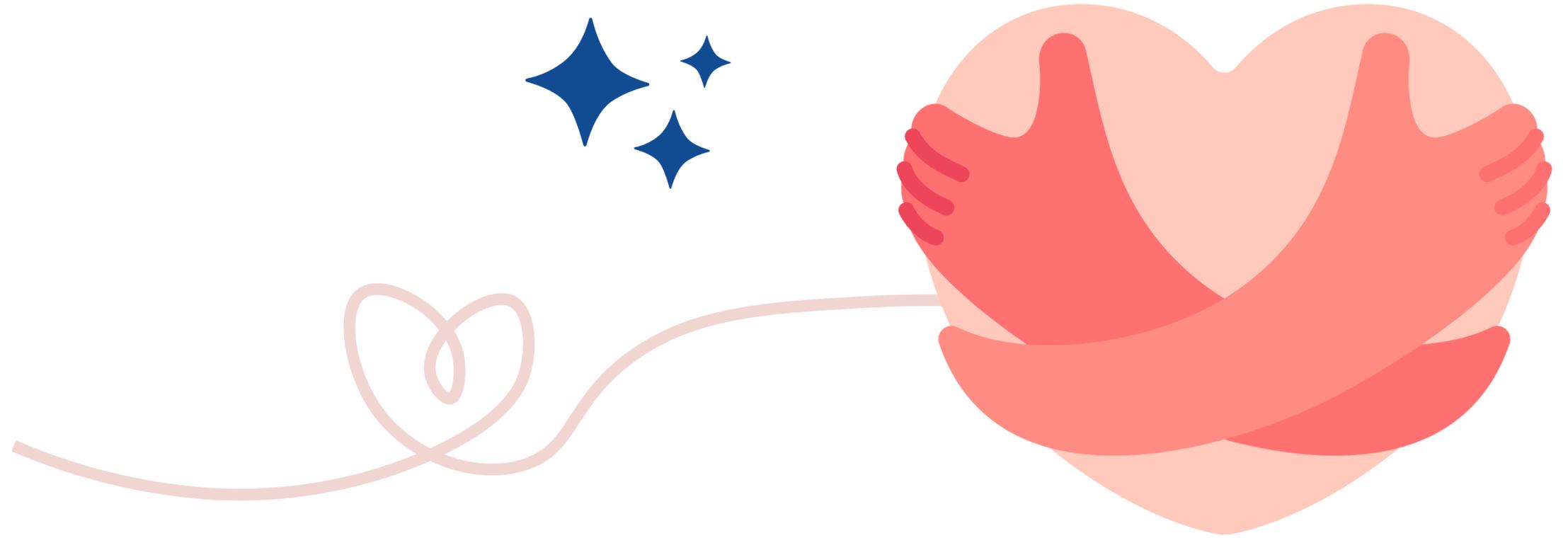


GROUNDING EXERCISE 2

• Instructions:

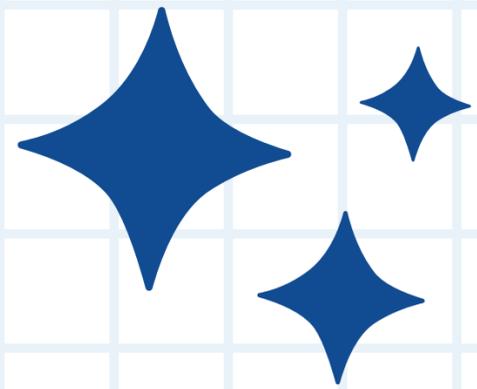
- 1. Inhale through your nose for 4 seconds.
- 2. Hold your breath for 7 seconds.
- 3. Exhale slowly for 8 seconds.
Do this five times.





FINAL MESSAGE

Be kind to yourself. You are human.
Growth takes time. Healing takes love.
You deserve the same care you give to others.



THANK YOU!

Any Questions?

